

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended): An image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said image reading apparatus comprising:

generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal ~~on the basis of reading the image~~;

selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses ~~of image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

input instruction reception means for receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus ~~of user management information from the selected image-forming apparatus~~;

~~determination means for determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction~~;

input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction ~~result of the determination by said determination means~~;

output means for outputting the inputted user management information

to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~;

reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined for using the selected image-forming apparatus based on the output of the user management information; and

transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 2. (previously presented): An image reading apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said transmission control means compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 3 - 5. (canceled)

Claim 6. (currently amended): An image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said image reading method comprising the steps of:

reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

selecting one from the plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus of ~~user management information from the selected image forming apparatus;~~

~~determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction;~~

controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction ~~result of the determination in said determining~~ step;

outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus;~~

receiving from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined ~~for using the selected image forming apparatus~~ based on the output of the user management information; and

controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 7. (previously presented): An image reading method according to Claim 6, wherein said control step includes compressing the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 8 - 14. (canceled)

Claim 15. (currently amended): A computer readable memory storing a program executing an image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses ~~image-forming apparatuses~~ via a network, said program comprising:

code for reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

code for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses ~~of image-forming apparatuses~~ for receipt of the generated image signal;

code for receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatuses ~~of user management information from the selected image-forming apparatus;~~

~~code for determining whether or not the input of the user management information is necessary, in accordance with the received input instruction;~~

code for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction ~~result of the determination by said determination code;~~

code for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image-forming apparatus;~~

code for receiving from the selected external printing apparatus ~~image apparatus~~, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined

for using the selected ~~image forming apparatus~~ based on the output of the user management information; and

code for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus ~~image forming apparatus~~, in accordance with the availability information.

Claim 16. (previously presented): A computer readable memory according to Claim 15, wherein said control code compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 17 - 25. (canceled)

Claim 26. (currently amended): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said selection means selects the ~~image forming~~ external printing apparatus according to the generated image signal.

Claim 27. (currently amended): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the management information relating to a user includes at least one of a user ID, a division ID, or a title ID for the authentication determination at the selected ~~image forming~~ external printing apparatus.

Claim 28 - 33. (canceled)